

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 06847 030638Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /057 W
-----119049 030641Z /13

R 021205Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5469
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 6847

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PGOV, SY, US, IS, EG, JO, PINR
SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTORS GIVE VIEWS ON PEACE PROCESS

SUMMARY: SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTORS HAVE GIVEN US
CONTRASTING VIEWS ON CURRENT STATE OF PEACE EFFORTS. DIRECTOR
OF ARAB AFFAIRS CALLED FOR CONVENING GENEVA ON BASIS OF TOPICAL
RATHER THAN GEOGRAPHIC SUBJECT MATTER WITH CONFERENCE PLENUM
TO NEGOTIATE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF SETTLEMENT WHILE GEOGRAPHIC
COMMITTEES WORKED OUT IMPLEMENTING ARRANGEMENTS. NECESSITY OF
PLO REPRESENTATION STRESSED. DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS
HOWEVER, OFFERED A HERETICAL VIEW AND CALLED FOR DIMINUTION
OF US EFFORTS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN CALLS ON SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTORS OCT 31, POLOFF AND
VISITING INR ANALYST VACCARO ENCOUNTERED DIFFERING VIEWS ON CURRENT
PEACE EFFORTS. DIRECTOR OF ARAB AFFAIRS BASHIR QUTUB SEEMED
MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THREE DIRECTORS VISITED ON CURRENT STATE-
OF-PLAY. (QUTUB INDICATED HE HAD BEEN CONSULTED ON CARTER-ASSAD
EXCHANGE ON WORKING PATER.) HE NOTED THAT SYRIA WISHED THAT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 06847 030638Z

PLENUM DEAL WITH QUESTIONS OF WITHDRAWAL, PALESTINIAN RIGHTS,
AND GUARANTEES OF PEACE. IN DISCUSSING THE LAST ITEM, QUTUB SAID
THAT THE CONFERENCE MUST DISCUSS THE "NATURE OF PEACE" BUT THEN
WENT ON THE STATE THAT AFTER 30 YEARS OF WARFARE IT WAS NOT REAL-
ISTIC TO EXPECT SYRIA TO ESTABLISH A WHOLD RANGE OF RELATIONS
WITH ISRAEL INCLUDING DIPLOMATIC. HE NOTED SYRIA WOULD ACCEPT
GEOGRAPHIC COMMITTEES CHARGED WITH IMPLEMENTING GENERAL PRINCIPLES

REACHED BY THE CONFERENCE PLENUM. HE EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT AGREEMENT ON PROCEDURAL QUESTIONED OF IMPORTANT THAN PRIOR UNDERSTANDINGS CONCERNING SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS BECAUSE FAILURE OR LACK OF PROGRESS AT GENEVA WOULD BE VERY DANGEROUS.

2. WHEN QUESTIONED ABOUT DIFFERENCES EXISTING BETWEEN EGYPT AND SYRIA, HE CONCEDED THAT ON PROCEDURAL ISSUES THERE WERE SOME DIFFERENCES. NOTING THAT HE HAD BEEN IN EGYPT IN EARLY OCTOBER, HE FIRMLY STATED THAT EVEN EGYPT COULD NOT ACCEPT A CEREMONIAL OPENING WITH UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION HAVING NO REAL NEGOTIATING RESPONSIBILITY OR ROLE AT GENEVA. HE ASSERTED THAT EGYPT ADHERED TO SAME PRINCIPLES AS SYRIA REGARDING NECESSITY FOR PLO REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA AND RESTORATION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS.

3. IN SUBSEQUENT MEETING, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND PLANNING MUNIR AL-RIFAI EMPHASIZED NECESSITY FOR PLO ATTENDANCE AT GENEVA CONFERENCE SINCE "100 DETERMINED PALESTINIAN COMMANDOS COULD UPSET ANY AGREEMENT SIGNED BY ARAB STATES. THAT IS WHY THE PALESTINIANS MUST SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY AGREEMENT REACHED AT THE CONFERENCE." RIFAI ARGUED THAT THE ARABS DID NOT TRY TO DICTATE TO ISRAEL COMPOSITION OF ITS DELEGATION, AND THAT ISRAEL HAD NO RIGHT TO TRY TO IMPOSE ITS WILL ON THE ARABS IN THIS MATTER.

4. IN FINAL CALL, DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS SHOUIFI PRESENTED UNORTHODOX VIEWS FOR WHICH HE IS WELL KNOWN, HE AGRUED THAT PRES CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DAMASC 06847 030638Z

CARTER WHOULD NOT SET DEADLINES FOR RECONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE SINCE THIS GAVE THE FEWISH LOBBY INCREASED LEVERAGE. SHOUIFI EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM THAT THE US WOULD OPT OUT OF ITS ROLE AS PRINCIPAL MEDIATOR DESPITE RECENT STATEMENT BY CARTER THAT HE COULD NOT AFFORD TO DEVOTE SO MUCH TIME TO THE PROBLEM IF PROGRESS WAS NOT SOON FORTHCOMING. SHOUIFI OPINED THAT A LITTLE LESS COMMITMENT ON THE PART OF THE US WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE A BAD THING. WHEN ASKED IF A FAILURE TO CONVENE GENEVA SOON OR TO SHOW SOME TANGIBLE PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE WASN'T NECESSARY FOR STABILITY OF SOME ARAB REGIMES, SHOUIFI RESPONDED THAT WHILE THIS MIGHT BE TRUE, ANY ARAB GOVERNMENT WHOSE VIABILITY DEPENDED ON SUCH PROGRESS WAS NOT WORTH NEGOTIATING WITH

5. SHOUIFI FURTHER ASSERTED THAT ARAB PUBLIC OPINION WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MODERATION OF SOME ARAB LEADERS, INCLUDING ASSAD, AND NOT VICE-VERSA. ASSAD ONLY FOLLOWING PUBLIC OPINION IN SEEKING PEACE RATHER THAN LEADING IT. HE ASSERTED THAT ANY GOVERNMENT COMING TO POWER IN SYRIA IN THE CURRENT ATMOSPHERE WOULD HAVE TO EXERT EFFORTS FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE PROBLEM. HE PREDICTED THAT IF ASSAD'S INTERNAL POSITION WEAKENED THIS WOULD BE REFLECTED BY A HARDENING OF SYRIAN NEGOTIATING POSITIONS "SINCE WEAK GOVERNMENTS CAN'T COMPROMISE."

6. COMMENT: QUTUB'S REMARKS APPEAR TO BE AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF SYRIA'S POLICIES. QUTUB IS A VETERAN DIPLOMAT WITH GOOD BAATHI CONNECTIONS WHO SEEMS TO ENJOY SOMEWHAT HIGHER STATUS THAN HIS FELLOW DIRECTORS AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. HE EVIDENTLY IS CONSULTED ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SYRIA'S NEGOTIATING STRATEGY. SHOUFFI'S COMMENTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, WHILE THEY SHOULD NOT BE DISMISSED OUT OF HAND, ARE OBVIOUSLY SELF-SERVING AND MENT TO REASSURE US THAT A CHANGE IN REGIME WOULD NOT AFFECT US PEACE EFFORTS. HIS ADVICE TO SLOW DOWN OUR EFFORTS MAY EVEN REFLECT HIS HOPE THAT PROLONGATION OF CURRENT EFFORTS TO RECONVENE GENRVA WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT ASSAD.
MURPHY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 DAMASC 06847 030638Z

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PEACE PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 02-Nov-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DAMASC06847
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X4
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770404-0939
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197711106/aaaadmte.tel
Line Count: 136
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 55cfaf0e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 405431
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTORS GIVE VIEWS ON PEACE PROCESS SUMMARY: SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTORS HAVE GIVEN US CONTRASTING VIEWS ON CURRENT STATE O F PEACE EFFORT
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, SY, US, IS, EG, JO, STATE
To: STATE AMMAN
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/55cfaf0e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009